



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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September 29, 2009

**FORMER LIQUOR ENFORCEMENT OFFICER CHARGED WITH EXTORTION**

PHILADELPHIA - Gina Marie Kepler, a former State Police Liquor Enforcement Officer, was indicted today on seven counts of Hobbs Act extortion allegedly committed between October 2006 and October 2008, announced United States Attorney Michael L. Levy, FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Jan Fedarcy, and Pennsylvania State Police Colonel Frank E. Pawlowski. According to the indictment, Kepler used the power of her official position to obtain money from the owners of establishments that serve alcoholic beverages to patrons.

In her capacity as a Liquor Enforcement Officer, or LEO, Kepler had the authority to inspect businesses serving alcohol, to conduct investigations regarding the illegal sale of alcohol, to issue citations, and to order establishments to close if found in violation of Pennsylvania's liquor laws. According to the indictment, Kepler was soliciting or collecting money in connection with her official duties which is prohibited by Pennsylvania's Rules of Conduct for Enforcement Officers. The indictment details seven separate instances in which Kepler is alleged to have used her official capacity to extort money from bars and restaurants holding liquor licenses. The establishments include: The Chill Bar in Holland, Bucks County; Kenny's Spirited Eatery in Southampton, Bucks County; Johnny Apples Restaurant in Holland, Bucks County; Maggio's in Southampton, Bucks County; the Langhorne Hotel in Langhorne, Bucks County; Jerzee's Sports Bar in Glenside, Montgomery County; and Bobby's Burgers Tavern in Conshohocken, Montgomery County.

According to the indictment, Kepler promised the business owners that, in exchange for money, she would give them "scanners" to use in checking the identification of their patrons. But Kepler never delivered the scanners, or delivered them only to collect them later. Kepler also allegedly received money from one owner in exchange for the promise to resolve a regulatory problem. Finally, Kepler allegedly borrowed money from one owner and never repaid it.

"Public offices, especially those operating within law enforcement agencies, must not be for sale," said Levy. "Extortion by a public official is a serious offense because it erodes the public trust. In this case, the erosion is even more severe because of the damage inflicted on the Pennsylvania State Police and state liquor enforcement operations."

“This defendant took an oath to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and instead allegedly used her official position and the authority vested in it to enrich herself personally,” said Special Agent-in-Charge Janice K. Fedarczyk. “The citizens of the Commonwealth have a right to expect honest services from their public officials, and the FBI and our partners are committed to helping ensure that is exactly what they get.”

“Kepler was suspended without pay from her position as a liquor enforcement officer when the investigation began and later left state service,” Pawlowski said. “Our department cooperated in the investigation.”

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE OR YEAR OF BIRTH
Gina Marie Kepler	Warrington, PA	34

If convicted the defendant faces a maximum possible sentence of 140 years imprisonment, a \$1,750,000 fine, three years supervised release and a \$700 special assessment.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Pennsylvania State Police and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Arlene D. Fisk.

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